

Suspend the Rules And Pass the Bill, H.R. 4821, with Amendments

(The amendments strike all after the enacting clause and insert a new text and a new title)

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 4821

To hold accountable senior officials of the Government of the People's Republic of China who are responsible for, complicit in, or have directly persecuted Christians in China, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 29, 2021

Mrs. HARTZLER (for herself, Mr. DUNCAN, Mr. GALLAGHER, Mr. LAMBORN, Mr. ADERHOLT, Mr. LATTA, Mr. BILIRAKIS, Mr. WEBER of Texas, Ms. SALAZAR, Mr. TIMMONS, Mr. GOOD of Virginia, Mr. HICE of Georgia, Mr. BUDD, Mr. HARRIS, Mr. STEUBE, Mr. GUEST, Mr. GOHMERT, Mrs. MILLER-MEEKS, Mr. GAETZ, Mr. BABIN, Mr. MULLIN, Mr. BROOKS, Mrs. WAGNER, Mr. PFLUGER, Mr. RESCHENTHALER, Mr. GROTHMAN, Mr. JOHNSON of Ohio, Ms. LETLOW, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. MANN, Mr. WALTZ, Mr. ALLEN, Mr. OWENS, Mr. BUCK, Mrs. MILLER of Illinois, and Ms. STEFANIK) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committees on the Judiciary, and Ways and Means, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To hold accountable senior officials of the Government of the People's Republic of China who are responsible for, complicit in, or have directly persecuted Christians in China, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Combating the Perse-
5 cution of Religious Groups in China Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) According to the Department of State’s
9 International Religious Freedom (IRF) report esti-
10 mates, Buddhists comprise 18.2 percent of the coun-
11 try’s total population, Christians, 5.1 percent, Mus-
12 lims, 1.8 percent, followers of folk religions, 21.9
13 percent, and atheists or unaffiliated persons, 52.2
14 percent, with Hindus, Jews, and Taoists comprising
15 less than one percent.

16 (2) The Government of the People’s Republic of
17 China (PRC) recognizes five official religions, Bud-
18 dhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholi-
19 cism (according to the State Department’s IRF re-
20 port) and only religious groups belonging to one of
21 the five sanctioned “patriotic religious associations”
22 representing these religious are permitted to register
23 with the government and hold worship service, ex-
24 cluding all other faiths and denying the ability to

1 worship without being registered with the govern-
2 ment.

3 (3) The activities of state-sanctioned religious
4 organizations are regulated by the Chinese Com-
5 munist Party, which manages all aspects of religious
6 life.

7 (4) The Chinese Communist Party is actively
8 seeking to control, govern, and manipulate all as-
9 pects of faith through the “Sinicization of Religion”,
10 a process intended to shape religious traditions and
11 doctrines so they conform with the objectives of the
12 Chinese Communist Party.

13 (5) On February 1, 2018, the PRC Government
14 implemented new religious regulations that imposed
15 restrictions on Chinese contacts with overseas reli-
16 gious organizations, required government approval
17 for religious schools, websites, and any online reli-
18 gious service, and effectively banned unauthorized
19 religious gatherings and teachings.

20 (6) There are numerous reports that authorities
21 forced closures of Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, and
22 Taoist houses of worship and destroyed public dis-
23 plays of religious symbols throughout the country.

24 (7) Authorities arrested and detained religious
25 leaders trying to hold services online.

1 (8) There are credible reports of Chinese au-
2 thorities raiding house churches and other places of
3 religious worship, removing and confiscating reli-
4 gious paraphernalia, installing surveillance cameras
5 on religious property, pressuring congregations to
6 sing songs of the Chinese Communist Party and dis-
7 play the national flag during worship, forcing
8 churches to replace images of Jesus Christ or the
9 Virgin Mary with pictures of General Secretary Xi
10 Jinping, and banning children and students from at-
11 tending religious services.

12 (9) It has been reported that the PRC is rewrit-
13 ing and will issue a version of the Bible with the
14 “correct understanding” of the text according to the
15 Chinese Communist Party. Authorities continued to
16 restrict the printing and distribution of the Bible,
17 Quran, and other religious literature, and penalized
18 publishing and copying businesses that handled reli-
19 gious materials.

20 (10) According to the Department of State’s
21 IRF reports, the PRC Government has imprisoned
22 thousands of individuals of all faiths for practicing
23 their religious beliefs and often labels them as
24 “cults”.

1 (11) The Political Prisoner Database main-
2 tained by the human rights NGO Dui Hua Founda-
3 tion counted 3,492 individuals imprisoned for “orga-
4 nizing or using a ‘cult’ to undermine implementation
5 of the law.” Prisoners include—

6 (A) the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun
7 Choekyi Nyima, who has been held captive
8 along with his parents since May 17, 1995;

9 (B) Pastor Zhang Shaojie, a Three-Self
10 church pastor from Nanle County in central
11 Henan was sentenced in July 2014 to 12 years
12 in prison for “gathering a crowd to disrupt the
13 public order”;

14 (C) Pastor John Cao, a United States per-
15 manent resident from Greensboro, North Caro-
16 lina, who was sentenced for 7 years in prison in
17 March 2018 under contrived charges of orga-
18 nizing illegal border crossings; and

19 (D) Pastor Wang Yi of the Early Rain
20 Covenant Church who was arrested and sen-
21 tenced to 9 years in prison for “inciting to sub-
22 vert state power” and “illegal business oper-
23 ations”.

1 (12) Authorities continue to detain Falun Gong
2 practitioners and subject them to harsh and inhu-
3 mane treatment.

4 (13) Since 1999, the Department of State has
5 designated the PRC as a country of particular con-
6 cern under the International Religious Freedom Act
7 of 1998.

8 (14) The Bipartisan Congressional Trade Prior-
9 ities and Accountability Act of 2015 states that the
10 United States overall trade negotiating objectives
11 must “take into account conditions relating to reli-
12 gious freedom of any party to negotiations for a
13 trade agreement with the United States”.

14 (15) The National Security Strategy of the
15 United States, issued in 2017, 2015, 2006, 2002,
16 1999, 1998, and 1997, committed the United States
17 to promoting international religious freedom to ad-
18 vance the security, economic, and other national in-
19 terests of the United States.

20 **SEC. 3. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

21 (a) HOLDING PRC OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR
22 RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ABUSES TARGETING CHINESE
23 CHRISTIANS OR OTHER RELIGIOUS MINORITIES.—It is
24 the policy of the United States to consider senior officials
25 of the Government of the People’s Republic of China

1 (PRC) who are responsible for, complicit in, or have di-
2 rectly persecuted Christians or other religious minorities
3 in the PRC to have committed—

4 (1) a gross violation of internationally recog-
5 nized human rights for purposes of imposing sanc-
6 tions with respect to such officials under the Global
7 Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (22
8 U.S.C. 2656 note); and

9 (2) a particularly severe violation of religious
10 freedom for purposes of applying section
11 212(a)(2)(G) of the Immigration and Nationality
12 Act (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(2)(G)) with respect to such
13 officials.

14 (b) ENSURING TRADE NEGOTIATIONS CONSIDER RE-
15 LIGIOUS FREEDOM CONDITIONS.—It is the policy of the
16 United States to ensure that trade negotiations with the
17 PRC include religious freedom conditions as mandated by
18 the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Ac-
19 countability Act of 2015 (19 U.S.C. 4201 et seq.).

20 (c) DEPARTMENT OF STATE PROGRAMMING TO PRO-
21 MOTE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC
22 OF CHINA.—Consistent with section 401 of the Frank R.
23 Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (Public Law
24 114– 281; 130 Stat. 1436), of the funds available to the
25 Department of State for international religious freedom

1 programs, the Ambassador-at-Large for International Re-
2 ligious Freedom should support efforts to protect and pro-
3 mote international religious freedom in the PRC and for
4 programs to protect Christians and other religious minori-
5 ties in the PRC.

6 (d) DESIGNATION OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
7 CHINA AS A COUNTRY OF PARTICULAR CONCERN.—It is
8 the policy of the United States to continue to designate
9 the PRC as a “country of particular concern”, as long
10 as the PRC continues to engage in systematic and egre-
11 gious religious freedom violations, as defined by the Inter-
12 national Religious Freedom Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–
13 292).

14 **SEC. 4. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

15 It is the sense of Congress that the United States
16 should promote religious freedom in the PRC by—

17 (1) strengthening religious freedom diplomacy
18 on behalf of Christians and other religious minorities
19 facing restrictions in the PRC;

20 (2) raising cases relating to religious or political
21 prisoners at the highest levels with PRC officials be-
22 cause experience demonstrates that consistently rais-
23 ing prisoner cases can result in improved treatment,
24 reduced sentences, or in some cases, release from
25 custody, detention, or imprisonment;

1 (3) encouraging Members of Congress to
2 “adopt” a prisoner of conscience in the PRC
3 through the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commis-
4 sion’s “Defending Freedom Project”, raise the case
5 with PRC officials, and work publicly for their re-
6 lease;

7 (4) calling on the PRC Government to uncondi-
8 tionally release religious and political prisoners or, at
9 the very least, ensure that detainees are treated hu-
10 manely with access to family, the lawyer of their
11 choice, independent medical care, and the ability to
12 practice their faith while in detention;

13 (5) encouraging the global faith community to
14 speak in solidarity with the persecuted religious
15 groups in the PRC; and

16 (6) hosting, once every two years, the Ministe-
17 rial to Advance Religious Freedom organized by the
18 Department of State in order to bring together lead-
19 ers from around the world to discuss the challenges
20 facing religious freedom, identify means to address
21 religious persecution and discrimination worldwide,
22 and promote great respect for and preservation of
23 religious liberty.

1 **SEC. 5. SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING ACTIONS AT**
2 **UNITED NATIONS.**

3 It is the sense of Congress that the United Nations
4 Human Rights Council should issue a formal condemna-
5 tion of the People's Republic of China for the ongoing
6 genocide against Uyghurs and other religious and ethnic
7 minority groups, as well as for its persecution of Chris-
8 tians, Falun Gong, and other religious groups.

Amend the title so as to read: “A bill to hold ac-
countable senior officials of the Government of the Peo-
ple's Republic of China who are responsible for, complicit
in, or have directly persecuted Christians or other reli-
gious minorities in China, and for other purposes.”.